

a medical home to more than 15 million Americans, most of whom are uninsured or have low incomes.

By providing people who are medically underserved with primary and preventive health care, the health centers reduce the need for expensive specialty care in hospitals and emergency rooms. The Health Centers Renewal Act will allow health centers to nearly double the number of individuals they can serve.

The Community Mental Health Services Improvement Act, which was introduced in January, will improve medical care for often-neglected mental health patients. Community mental health organizations serve more than six million adults and children across the country.

Many of these people are Medicaid beneficiaries, children in foster care, the destitute, homeless and uninsured. Unfortunately, community mental health centers have been chronically underfunded for many years and struggle to meet the basic health needs of the people they serve.

This bill will allow mental health care providers to recruit medical primary care doctors to care for patients with serious mental illness. Patients with mental illnesses die on average 25 years earlier than the average American, demonstrating the criticality of the need for better health care.

The Ending the Medicare Disability Waiting Period Act was introduced last year would close a loophole that allows more than a million people with disabilities to go without medical care for extended periods of time.

When Medicare expanded in 1972 to include individuals with significant disabilities, Congress stipulated that they had to first receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) for two years before becoming eligible for Medicare, resulting in a three step process.

First, the Social Security Administration has to determine SSDI approval. Second, an individual has to wait five months before receiving SSDI benefits. Third, after receiving SSDI benefits an individual has to wait two more years before they can receive Medicare coverage.

More than 26 percent of individuals with significant disabilities have no health insurance during this two-year wait. Before becoming disabled, most of these people worked full time and paid into Medicare like everyone else.

Now, when they need help the most, they are required to wait without coverage. This bill would phase out the two-year wait over 10 years and completely eliminate the waiting period for people with life-threatening conditions.

Finally, I strongly support restoring funding for the Healthy Community Access Program, which in my community has helped enroll an additional 250,000 individuals in Medicaid and CHIP, while also directing the uninsured away from the ERs and toward an appropriate health care home.

To address this issue, I introduced the Community Coalitions for Access and Quality Improvement Act, H.R. 3561. This legislation would provide grants to community health access coalitions to implement best practices proven to reduce health care costs, achieve better health outcomes and improve access to health care for uninsured and low-income Americans.

Congress should enact legislation to provide all Americans with health insurance. Ideally,

no child, no disabled worker, and no uninsured woman would suffer from a lack of adequate health care. As we work toward that goal, Congress should take every opportunity to put in place policies that provide as many people as possible with quality, affordable health insurance.

HONORING ELKS NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK

HON. LOIS CAPPS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mrs. CAPPS. Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Santa Maria Elks Club to honor the first week of May as Elks National Youth Week in tribute to our junior citizens and to honor them for their achievement and contributions to their community, State and Nation.

Youth Week is designed to guide, inspire and encourage our youth to serve their community and help prepare them for the duties and opportunities of citizenship. Across the country, our Nation's young people are becoming active citizens and learning the importance of civic involvement. I firmly believe in encouraging the sense of community demonstrated by these ambitious and engaged young people.

As a mother and a grandmother, I am amazed by the strength of character I see in junior citizens. I commend the goals and ideals of the Santa Maria Elks Club and am proud to honor America's future leaders today.

H. RES. 49, TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL LETTER CARRIERS APPRECIATION DAY

HON. BETTY MCCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Ms. MCCOLLUM of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 49, a resolution that establishes National Letter Carriers Appreciation Day.

Letter carriers are vital to the United States economy and help keep families and friends in touch with one another. They provide mail service 6 days a week, in good and bad weather, to more than 144 million households. The United States Postal Service employs more than 705,000 letter carriers who deliver more than 43 tons of mail each year. This averages to approximately 2,300 letters, cards, magazines, and circulars per carrier per day.

In addition, I would like to specifically honor Perry Bennet Schmitt, who has delivered mail to my District Office since I was first elected to Congress in 2000. My staff and I look forward to his daily visits where he brightens our day with jokes and stories. Perry has served the people of Saint Paul as a letter carrier for 28 years and has delivered mail on his current route for over twenty. It takes him six hours to deliver mail each day to over 350 stops. Perry is a designated letter carrier trainer and during his time with the Post Office has trained over a hundred carriers. He is also an active mem-

ber of Local 28 of the National Association of Letter Carriers, which represents over 1,000 members.

I want to thank Perry and all letter carriers for their dedication and urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

HONORING COUNCILMAN GENE BELMARES

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. CUELLAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Councilman Gene Belmares, who will be presented with the Liberty Bell Award by the Laredo-Webb County Bar Association on May 9, 2008.

Gene Belmares is the son of a decorated World War II veteran, Ignacio Belmares, and Elvira Belmares. He grew up in Laredo, Texas, and attended United High School and Laredo Junior College. Gene utilized his marketing skills to great effect in his work with some of South Texas's most prestigious companies such as Thomas Petroleum, Arguindegui Oil, and WestWind Homes. Gene is now enjoying his work with the marketing and sales team at the famous La Posada Hotel, one of the oldest hotels in South Texas that is leading the revitalization of downtown Laredo.

Councilman Belmares was elected to the Laredo City Council in 2002, and is seated on the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Water Issues, Sports Venue, and Legislative Committees. He is currently serving as Mayor Pro Tempore, and is responsible for the unprecedented fiscal growth of the City of Laredo for the last 6 years through his work on landmark ordinances and legacy projects. Councilman Belmares also has admirably served the community of Laredo, Texas, through his civic work with the March of Dimes, Muscular Dystrophy, and the American Cancer Society. He enjoys coaching the Gateway Girls Softball League, and the Boys and Girls Club flag football.

Councilman Belmares is a truly deserving recipient of the Liberty Bell Award, which is given out annually by the Laredo-Webb County Bar Association to those who have demonstrated exemplary community service, and contributed to good governance in the community.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to have had this time to recognize the dedication of Councilman Belmares to the City of Laredo, and I thank you for this time.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO HARVEY ALLEN

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 8, 2008

Mr. PORTER. Madam Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today to honor my friend Harvey Allen by entering his name in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, the official record of the proceedings and debates of the United States Congress since 1873. Today I pay tribute to